

# The Land of Broken Promises

A Stirring Story  
of the Mexican  
Revolution

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"The Fighting Fool"  
"Hidden Waters"  
"The Testimonies," Etc.  
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## SYNOPSIS.

Bud Hooker and Phil De Lancey are forced, owing to a revolution in Mexico, to give up their mining claim and return to the United States. In the border town of Gadsden Bud meets Henry Kruger, a wealthy miner, who makes him a proposition to return to Mexico to acquire title to a mine which Kruger had bought up when he found he had been cheated out of the title by one Aragon. The Mexican had spent a large sum in an unsuccessful attempt to relocate the vein and then had allowed the land to revert for taxes. Hooker and De Lancey start for the mine. They arrive at Fortuna near where the mine known as the Eagle Tail is located, and get information about Aragon and a Mexican named Cruz Mendez who is friendly to Kruger.

## CHAPTER VI—Continued.

"Que busca?" the one-eyed one finally inquired; "what are you looking for?"

And when Phil orally answered, "Gold!" the old man made a motion to the boy to go on and sat down on a neighboring rock.

"Do you want to buy a prospect?" he asked, and Bud glanced up at him grimly.

"We find our own prospects," answered Phil.

"But I know of a very rich prospect," protested Mendez; "very rich!" He shrilled his voice to express how rich it was.

"Yes?" observed Phil; "then why don't you dig the gold out? But, as for us, we find our own mines. That is our business."

"Seguro!" nodded Mendez, glancing at their outfit approvingly. "But I am a poor man—very poor—I cannot do more than mine. So I wait for some rich American to come and buy it. I have a friend—a very rich man—in Gadsden, but he will not come; so I will sell it to you."

"Did you get that, Bud?" teased Phil in English. "The old man here thinks we're rich Americans and he wants to sell us a mine."

Bud laughed silently at this, and Mr. Mendez, his hopes somewhat blasted by their levity, began to boast of his find, giving the history of the Eagle Tail with much circumstantiality and explaining that it was a lost padre mine.

"Sure," observed Phil, going back to his horse and picking up the bridle, "that's what they all say. They're all lost padre mines, and you can see them from the door of the church. Come on, Bud, let's go!"

"And so you could this!" cried Mendez, running along after them as they rode slowly up the canyon. "Away the old church that was washed away by the flood! This is the very mine where the padres dug out all their gold! Are you going up this way? Come, then, and I will show you—the very place, except that the American ruined it with a blast!"

He tagged along after them, wheedling and protesting while they bickered him about his mine, until they finally came to the place—the ruins of the Eagle Tail.

It lay spraddled out along the hillside, a series of gopher-holes, dumps and abandoned workings, looking more like a badly managed stone quarry than a relic of padre days. Kruger's magazine of giant powder, exploded in one big blast, had destroyed all traces of his mine, besides starting an avalanche of loose shale that had poured down and filled the pocket.

Added to this, Aragon and his men had rooted around in the debris in search of the vein, and the story of their inefficient work was told by great piles of loose rock stacked up beside caved-in trenches and a series of timid tunnels driven into the neighboring ridges.

Under the circumstances it would certainly call for a mining engineer to locate the lost lead, and De Lancey looked it over thoughtfully as he began to figure on the work to be done. Undoubtedly there was a mine there—and the remains of an old Spanish smelter down the creek showed that the ground had once been very rich—but if Kruger had not told him in advance he would have passed up the job in a minute.

"Well," he said, turning coldly upon the fawning Mendez, who was all curves in his desire to please, "where is your prospect?"

"Aqui, señor!" replied the Mexican, pointing to the disrupted rock slide. "Here it was that the American Crooka had his mine—rich with gold—much gold!"

He shrilled his voice emphatically, and De Lancey shrilled his in reply. "Here?" he exclaimed, gazing blankly at the hillside, and then he broke into a laugh. "All right, my friend," he said, giving Bud a facetious wink; "how much do you want for this prospect?"

"Four hundred dollars," answered Mendez in a tone of once hopeful and apologetic. "It is very rich. Señor Crooka shipped some ore that was full of gold. I packed it out for him on my burro; but, I am sorry, I have no piece of it!"

"Yes," responded De Lancey, "I am sorry, too. So, of course, we cannot buy the prospect since you have no ore to show; but I am glad for this, Señor Mendez," he continued with a kindly smile; "it shows that you are an honest man, or you would have stolen a piece of ore from the sack. So show us now where the gold was found, the nearest that you can remember, and perhaps, if we think we can find it, we will pay you to denounce the claim for us."

At this the one-eyed eye of Cruz Mendez lighted up with a great hope and, skipping lightly over the rock piles with his sandaled feet, he ran to a certain spot, locating it by looking across the canyon and up and down the creek.

"Here, señores," he pronounced, "is where the mouth of the old tunnel came out. Standing inside it I could

see that tree over there, and looking down the river I could just see the smelter around the point. So, then, the gold must be in there." He pointed toward the hill.

"Surely," said De Lancey; "but where?"

The old Mexican shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly.

"I do not know, señor," he answered; "but if you wish to dig I will denounce the claim for you."

"For how much?" inquired De Lancey guardedly.

"For one hundred dollars," answered Mendez, and to his delight the American seemed to be considering it.

He walked back and forth across the slide, picking up rocks and looking at them, dropping down into the fullest trenches of Aragon, and frowning with studious thought. His partner, however, sat listlessly on a boulder and tested the action of his six-shooter.

"Listen, my friend," said De Lancey, coming back and pointing his finger impressively. "If I should find the ledge the one hundred dollars would be nothing to me, safe? And if I should spend all my money for nothing it would be but one hundred dollars more. But listen! I have known some false Mexicans who, when an American paid them to denounce a mine, took advantage of his kindness and refused to give it over. Or, if it turned out to

be rich, they pulled a long face and claimed that they ought to be paid more. Now if—"

"Ah, no, señor!" clamored Mendez, holding up his hand in protest; "I am a poor man, but I am honest. Only give me the hundred dollars—"

"Not a dollar do you get!" cried De Lancey sternly; "not a dollar—until you turn over the concession to the mine. And if you play us false," he paused impressively—"cuidado, hombre—look out!"

Once more Cruz Mendez protested his honesty and his fidelity to any trust, but De Lancey silenced him impatiently.

"Enough, hombre!" he said. "Words are nothing to us. Do you see my friend over there?" He pointed to Bud, who, huge and dominating against the sky line, sat toying with his pistol. "Buen! He is a cowboy, sabe? A Texan! You know the Tejanos, eh? They do not like Mexicans. But my friend there, he likes Mexicans—when they are honest. If not—no! Hey, Bud," he called in English, "what would you do to this fellow if he beat us out of the mine?"

Bud turned upon them with a slow, good-natured smile.

"Oh, nothing much," he answered, putting up his gun; and the deep rumble of his voice struck fear into the old man's heart.

Phil laughed and looked grimly at Mendez while he delivered his ultimatum.

"Very well, my friend," he said. "We will stay and look at this mine. If we think it is good we will take you to the mining agent and get a permit to dig. For sixty days we will dig, and if we find nothing we will pay you fifty dollars, anyway. If we find the ledge we will give you a hundred dollars. All right?"

"Si, señor, si, señor!" cried Mendez, "one hundred dollars!"

"When you give us the papers!" warned Phil. "But remember—be careful! The Americans do not like men who talk. And come to the hotel at Fortuna tomorrow—then we will let you know."

"And you will buy the mine?" begged Mendez, backing off with his hat in his hand.

"Perhaps," answered De Lancey. "We will tell you tomorrow."

"Buen!" bowed Mendez; "and many thanks!"

"It is nothing," replied De Lancey politely, and then, with a crooked smile he gazed after the old man as he went hurrying off down the canyon.

"Well," he observed, "I guess we've got Mr. Mendez started just about right—what? Now if we can keep him without the price of a drink until we get our papers we stand a chance to win."

"That's right," said Bud; "but I wish he had two good eyes. I knowed a one-eyed Mex up in Arizona and he was sure a thieving son of a goat."

## CHAPTER VII.

There are doubtless many philanthropists in the Back Bay regions of Boston who would consider the whistling of Cruz Mendez a very reprehensible act. And one hundred dollars Mex was certainly a very small

reward for the service that he was to perform.

But Bud and Phil were not traveling for any particular uplift society, and one hundred pesos was a lot of money to Cruz Mendez. More than that, if they had offered him a thousand dollars for the same service he would have got avaricious and demanded ten thousand.

He came to the hotel very early the next morning and lingered around an hour or so, waiting for the American gentleman to arise and tell him his fate. A hundred dollars would buy everything that he could think of, including a quantity of mescal. His throat dried at the thought of it.

Then the gentlemen appeared and asked him many questions—whether he was married according to law, whether his wife would sign the papers with him, and if he believed in a hereafter for those who played false with Americans. Having answered all these in the affirmative, he was taken to the agent mineral, and, after signing his name—his one feat in penmanship—several imposing documents, he was given the precious permit.

Then there was another trip to the grounds with a surveyor, to make report that the claim was actually vacant, and Mendez went back to his normal duties as a packer.

In return for this service as a dummy locator, and to keep him under their eye, the Americans engaged El Tuerto, the one-eyed, to pack out a few tools and supplies for them; and then, to keep him busy, they employed him further to build a stone house.

All these activities were, of course, not lost on Don Cipriano Aragon y Tres Palacios, since, by a crafty arrangement of fences, he had made it impossible for anyone to reach the lower country without passing through the crooked street of Old Fortuna.

During the first and the second trip of the strange Americans he kept within his dignity, hoping perhaps that they would stop at his store, where they could be engaged in conversation; but upon their return from a third trip, after Cruz Mendez had gone through with their supplies, he cast his proud Spanish reserve to the winds and layd it on the street.

"Buenas tardes, señores," he saluted, as they rode past his store, and then, seeing that they did not break their gait, he held up his hand for them to stop.

"Excuse me, gentlemen," he said, speaking gently but with an affected Spanish lisp, "I have seen you ride past several times—are you working for the big company up at New Fortuna?"

"No, señor," answered De Lancey courteously, "we are working for ourselves."

"Good!" responded Aragon with fatherly approval; "it is better so. And are you looking at mines?"

"Yes," said De Lancey non-committally; "we are looking at mines."

"That is good, too," observed Aragon; "and I wish you well, but since you are strangers to this country and perhaps do not know the people as well as some, I desire to warn you against that one-eyed man, Cruz Mendez, with whom I have seen you riding. He is a worthless fellow—a very peña Mexican, one who has nothing—and yet he is always seeking to impose upon strangers by selling them old mines which have no value."

"I have no desire to speak ill of my neighbors, but since he has moved into the brush house up the river I have lost several fine little pigs; and by his eye, as I know, was torn from his head as he was chasing another man's cow. I have not suffered him on my ranch for years, for he is such a thief, and yet he has the effrontery to represent himself to strangers as a poor but honest man. I hope that he has not imposed upon you in any way."

"No; not at all, thank you," responded De Lancey, as Bud raised his bridle reins to go. "We hired him to pack out our tools and supplies and he has done it very reasonably. But many thanks, sir, for your warning. Adios!"

He touched his hat and waved his hand in parting, and Bud grinned as he settled down to a trot.

"You can't help palavering 'em, can you, Phil?" he said. "No matter what you think about 'em, you got to be polite, haven't you? Well, that's the way you get drawn in—next time you go by now the old man will pump you dry—y'ee. No, sir, the only way to get along with these Mexicans is not to have a thing to do with 'em. No savvy—that's my motto!"

"He's out!" muttered Phil, as they drew near enough to see his face. "What shall we do?"

"Do nothing," growled Bud through his teeth; "you jest let me do the talking!"

He maneuvered his horse adroitly and, with a skillful turn, cut in between his partner and Aragon.

"Si dias," he greeted, gazing down in bulky defiance at the militant Aragon; and at the same moment he gave De Lancey's horse a furtive touch with his spur.

"Buenos dias, señores!" returned Aragon, striding forward to intercept them; but as neither of the Americans looked back, he was left standing in the middle of the street.

"That's the way to handle 'em," observed Hooker, as they trotted briskly down the lane. "Leave 'em to me!"

"It'll only make him mad," objected De Lancey crossly. "What do you want to do that for?"

"He's mad already," answered Bud. "I want to quarrel with him, so he

and conspire with that rogue, Cruz Mendez, to cheat me out of it? It is mine, I tell you, no matter what the agent mineral may say, and—"

"Your mine, nothing!" broke in Hooker scornfully, speaking in the ungrammatical border-Mexican of the cowboys. "We meet one Mexican—he shows us the mine—that is all. The expert of the mining agent says it is vacant—we take it. Stawano!"

He waved the matter aside with masterful indifference, and Aragon burst into a torrent of excited Spanish.

"Very likely, very likely," commented Bud dryly, without listening to a word. "Si, señor, yo pienso!"

A wave of fury swept over the Spaniard's face at this gibe and he turned suddenly to De Lancey.

"Señor," he said, "you seem to be a gentleman. Perhaps you will listen to me. This mine upon which you are working is mine. I have held it for years, seeking for the lost vein of the old padres. Then the rebels came sweeping through the land. They stole my horses, they drove off my cattle, they frightened my workmen from the mine. I was compelled to flee—myself and my family—to keep from being held for ransom. Now you do me the greatest injustice to seize my mine!"

"Ah, no, señor," protested De Lancey, waving his finger politely for silence, "you are mistaken. We have inquired about this mine and it has been vacant for some time. There is no vein—no gold. Anyone who wished could take it. While we were prospecting we met this poor one-eyed man and he has taken out a permit to explore it. So we are going to dig—that is all!"

"But, señor!" burst out Aragon—and he voiced his rabid protests again, while sudden fumes appeared in the windows and wide-eyed peons stood gawking in a crowd. But De Lancey was equally firm, though he glimpsed for the first time the adorable face of La Gracia as she stared at him from behind the bars.

"No, señor," he said, "you are mistaken. The land was declared forfeit for non-payment of taxes by the minister of Fomento and thrown open for location. We have located it—that is all."

"Well, 'muchas gracias' is mine," observed De Lancey. "It doesn't cost anything, and it buys a whole lot."

"Sure," agreed Bud; "but we ain't buying nothing from him—he's the one particular hombre we want to steer clear of, and keep him guessing as long as we can. That's my view of it, partner."

"Oh, that's all right," laughed De Lancey, "he won't get anything out of me—that is, nothing but a bunch of hot air. Say, he's a shrewd-looking old guinea, isn't he? Did you notice that game eye? He kept it kind of up real fierce. Reminds me of a big fighting owl waking up in the day-time. But you just watch me handle him, and if I don't foot the old boy at every turn it'll be because I run out of bull."

"Well, you can hand him the bull if you want to," grumbled Bud, "but the first time you give anything away I'm going to pick such a row with the old cuss that we'll have to make a new trail to get by. So leave 'em alone, if you ever expect to see that girl!"

A close association with Phil De Lancey had left Bud not unaware of his special weaknesses, and Phil was undoubtedly romantic. Given a barred and silent house, shut off from the street by whitened walls and a veranda screened with flowers, and the queering eyes of Mr. De Lancey would turn to those barred windows as certainly as the needle seeks the pole.

On every trip coming and going, he had conked the Aragon house from the vine-covered corridor in front to the walled-in summer garden behind, hoping to surprise a view of the beautiful daughter of the house. And unless rumor and Don Juan were at fault, she was indeed worthy of his solicitude—a gay and sprightly creature, brown-eyed like her mother and with the same glorious chestnut hair.

Already those dark, mischievous eyes had been busy and, at the last big dance at Fortuna, she had set many heads a-awirl. Twice within two years her father, in a rage, had sent her away to school in order to break off some ill-considered love affair; and now a battle royal was being waged between Manuel del Rey, the dashing captain of the rurales stationed at Fortuna, and Felix Luna, son of a rich haciendado down in the hot country, for the honor of her hand.

What more romantic, then, than that a handsome American, stepping gracefully into the breach, should keep the haughty lovers from slaying each other by bearing off the prize himself?

So reasoned Philip De Lancey, musing upon the ease with which he could act the part; but for prudential purposes he said nothing of his vaunting ambitions, knowing full well that they would receive an active veto from Bud.

For, while De Lancey did most of the talking, and a great deal of the thinking for the partnership, Hooker was not lacking in positive opinions; and upon sufficient occasion he would express himself, though often with more force than delicacy. Therefore, upon this unexpected sally about the girl, Phil changed the subject abruptly and said no more of Aragon or the hopes within his heart.

It was not so easy, however, to avoid Aragon, for that gentleman had apparently taken the pains to inform himself as to the place where they were at work, and he was waiting for them in the morning with a frown as black as a thunder cloud.

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can't ask us any questions. Get him so mad he won't talk—then it'll be a fair fight and none of this snake-in-the-grass business."

"Yes, but don't put it on him," protested De Lancey. "Let him be friendly for a while, if he wants to."

"Can't be friends," said Bud laconically; "we jumped his claim."

"Maybe he doesn't want it," suggested Phil hopefully. "He's dropped a lot of money on it."

"You bet he wants it," returned Hooker, with conviction. "I'm going to camp out there—the old boy is liable to jump us."

"Aw, you're crazy, Bud!" cried Phil; but Hooker only smiled.

"You know what happened to Kruger," he answered. "I'll tell you what, we got to keep our eye open around here."

They rode on to the mine, which was only about five miles from Fortuna, without discussing the matter further; for, while Phil had generally been the leader, in this particular case Kruger had put Bud in charge, and he seemed determined to have his way so far as Aragon was concerned.

In the ordering of supplies and the laying out of development work he deferred to Phil in everything, but for tactics he preferred his own judgment.

It was by instinct rather than reason that he chose to fight, and people who follow their instincts are hard to change. So they put in the day in making careful measurements, according to the memoranda that Kruger had given them; having satisfied themselves as to the approximate locality of the lost vein, they turned back again toward town with their heads full of cunning schemes.

Since it was the pleasure of the Señor Aragon to make war on all who entered his preserves, they checked any attempt on his part to locate the lead by driving stakes to the north of their ledge; and, still further to throw him off, they decided to mark time for a while by doing dead work on a cut. Such an approach would be needed to reach the mouth of their tunnel.

At the same time it would give steady employment to Mendez and keep him under their eye, and as soon as Aragon showed his hand they could make out their final papers in peace and send them to the City of Mexico.

And not until those final papers were recorded and the transfer duly made would they so much as stick a pick into the hillside or show a lump of quartz.

But for a Spanish gentleman, supposed to be all supple curves and sinuous advances, Don Cipriano turned out somewhat of a surprise, for when they rode back through his narrow street again he met them squarely in the road and called them to a halt.

"By what right, gentlemen?" he demanded in a voice tremulous with rage—"by what right do you take possession of my mine, upon which I have paid the taxes all these years,

and conspire with that rogue, Cruz Mendez, to cheat me out of it? It is mine, I tell you, no matter what the agent mineral may say, and—"

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